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The 50 Most Important People on the Web



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Despite what *Time* magazine would have you believe, *you* are not the most powerful or influential person on the Web. At *PC World* we love online personals, social networks, and videos of people falling on their keisters as much as the next person, but without the folks who create the Craigslists, MySpaces, and YouTubes of the world, much of the Web's potential would be lost among spam sites and other online detritus.

So who's making the biggest impact online? We considered hundreds of the Web's most noteworthy power brokers, bloggers, brainiacs, and entrepreneurs to figure out whose contributions are shaping the way we use the Web. We whittled the list down to the top 50--well, actually the top 62--people, but as you'll see, there are some you just can't separate. And don't despair: Get a little more traffic on your Web site, and you may show up on the list next year.

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IMPORTANT PEOPLE #1 THROUGH #5

1. Eric Schmidt, Larry Page, and Sergey Brin *Executives, Google*

When your stock price can top \$500 a share, you're collectively worth \$33 billion in cash, and you run the most trafficked search engine on the Internet, you can afford to do, well, pretty much whatever you want. Sergey Brin and Larry Page's little project from Stanford has grown into the Web's most talked-about powerhouse, and one of the few names on this list to have morphed into a verb. Schmidt left Novell to join the board of directors at Google in 2001 and soon became the company's CEO. Having conquered the online advertising world, Google seems to be gearing up for an acquisition spree, its headline-grabbing purchase of YouTube marking a big step toward complete domination of the Web.

2. Steve Jobs *CEO, Apple*

No doubt you're sick of the media bonanza surrounding the every move of Apple's CEO, but when one man's appeal for DRM-free music reverberates around the world, it's hard to ignore the power he wields. Jobs popularized legal music downloads and legal TV and movie downloads. And though the iPhone won't be released for five months, its demonstration at *MacWorld* Expo suggested that this product might finally popularize Internet browsing on a mobile device.

3. Bram Cohen *Cofounder, BitTorrent*

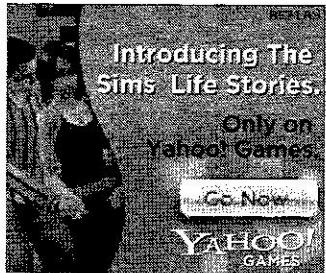
P2P systems like KaZaA and eDonkey are so last year. The future is all about BitTorrent, the brainchild of math wizard and programming wunderkind Bram Cohen. BitTorrent, developed in 2001, has gained in popularity as a way to download large files (like movies) by sharing the burden across hardware and bandwidth. The technology's adeptness at handling large files got Cohen in trouble with the Motion Picture Association of America, which ordered BitTorrent to remove copyrighted content from its network. But that setback hasn't slowed it down. Reportedly, more than a third of all Web traffic now comes from BitTorrent clients. BitTorrent and the entertainment heavyweights have since joined forces. The newly released BitTorrent Entertainment Network launched recently with thousands of industry-approved movies, television shows, games, and songs for sale and rental.

4. Mike Morhaime *President, Blizzard Entertainment*

In the world of online gaming, there is World of Warcraft and there is everything else. With 8 million players worldwide, Blizzard earns about \$1.5 billion a year on WoW. And each player is breathlessly beholden to Mike Morhaime for the chance—if it ever comes—to obtain that Blade of Eternal Justice. As with Second Life (see #17), entire real-world businesses are based around the game. Unlike Second Life, though, these businesses—which exploit the WoW economy and gameplay—are not entirely welcome.

5. Jimmy Wales Founder, Wikipedia

Many onliners treat Internet encyclopedia Wikipedia as their first and last stop in researching a topic; and its user generated content has become so reliable that *Nature* magazine declared it "close to [Encyclopaedia] Britannica" in accuracy. The site has been cited as a source of information in more than 100 U.S. court decisions since 2004. But its popularity has also made Wikipedia a target for spammers—so much so that Wikipedia temporarily blocked the entire country of Qatar from making edits. To thwart spammers, Wales decided to slap "nofollow" tags on external links, telling search engines to ignore the links in order to avoid artificially inflating the search engine ranking of the link targets. This strategy ensures that Wikipedia's prominence in search results will continue to grow. But Wikipedia may just be the beginning for Wales. He recently launched his own search engine, WikiSeek, which searches only sites mentioned in Wikipedia.



IMPORTANT PEOPLE #6 THROUGH #10

6. John Doerr Venture capitalist, Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield & Byers

A former salesman for Intel, John Doerr has been the king of Silicon Valley venture capital for 27 years, investing in tech businesses ranging from Sun Microsystems to Amazon.com to Google. Jeff Bezos (see #24) once described Doerr as "the center of gravity in the Internet." He has also put his money behind his politics, backing controversial state ballot initiatives in California involving alternative energy and stem-cell research.

7. Craig Newmark Founder, Craigslist

His Web site has no ads, charges absurdly low fees to a small fraction of its visitors, has a ".org" domain, and employs 23 people. Yet despite its humble appearance, Craigslist racked up 14.1 million page views last December and was the 52nd most viewed site last December according to comScore Media Metrix. Newmark's Craigslist has become an addiction for many, who impulsively refresh the listings of free stuff, "rants & raves," and personal ads while shirking their day jobs. Most importantly, it has almost singlehandedly demolished the offline classified advertising business. (In the San Francisco Bay Area alone, one study found, the site drains up to \$65 million annually from local newspapers' help-wanted ads.) Take that, old media!

8. Peter Levinsohn President, Fox Interactive Media

Fox Interactive Media, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, is one of the Web's most powerful entities, controlling 13 sites that range from uber-popular MySpace.com to controversial FoxNews.com. A complement to News Corp's array of traditional film and television properties, this Internet-focused division ranked among the top 10 visited properties in the world in December 2006, according to comScore World Metrix. And there will probably be more to come, as Fox Interactive still has \$2 billion in acquisition money to play around with, according to TechCrunch (see #30).

9. Marissa Mayer Vice president for search products & user experience, Google

Google's product czar oversees the search giant's increasingly diversified list of Web services and tools, such as Google Maps, Google Desktop, and Google Base—an eBay-esque e-commerce service. The first lady of Google joined the company as its first female engineer in 1999 (she was approximately employee #20) and worked on developing Google's now-familiar minimalist look. But don't accuse her of all work and no play; according to Google's Web site, she organizes employee movie nights.

10. Chad Hurley and Steve Chen Founders, YouTube

Despite Google's acquisition of the company, YouTube founders Chad Hurley (CEO) and

Steve Chen (CTO) look like they'll be shaking things up for some time to come. The Internet video kingpin announced plans to pay users for videos, and it has signed several big-media content partnerships (with MTV, NBC, Warner Music, and others). Fellow co-founder Jawed Karim left the company to pursue a master's in computer science at Stanford University.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE #11 THROUGH #15

11. Kevin J. MartinChairman, Federal Communications Commission

He may look innocent and unassuming, but Martin is arguably the most powerful bureaucrat on the Web. He took over the reins of the FCC in 2005, and to date he has encountered minimal controversy and none of the scandals that predecessor Michael Powell suffered. But that doesn't mean he couldn't cut off your Internet connection *like that* if he really wanted to.

12. Brad TempletonChairman of the board, Electronic Frontier Foundation

If you've ever found yourself on the wrong side of an electronic copyright or privacy scuffle, you know that Brad Templeton and the Electronic Frontier Foundation are your friends. They've defended file-sharers sued by the Recording Industry Association of America and filed complaints against America Online for disclosing subscriber search terms; currently they're fighting to unmuzzle bloggers who published leaked documents related to Eli Lilly's alleged misrepresentation of side effects of the drug Zyprexa. Templeton's passion about copyright and free speech is not surprising. The Web publishing veteran got his start back in 1989 when he founded ClariNet, a company that published what Templeton calls "the Net's first newspaper."

13. Henry ChonCEO, Cyworld

Don't call Cyworld a Korean MySpace; MySpace is an American Cyworld. In South Korea, an estimated 25 percent of the population (and 90 percent of people in their teens and twenties) have Cyworld accounts, where individuals design miniature animated avatars to represent them in its unique online space. In 2006 CEO Henry Chon brought Cyworld to U.S. shores. Though Cyworld hasn't yet achieved comparable success here, MySpace shouldn't rest easy if Chon's track record is any indication of future competition.

14. Shana FisherSenior vice president for strategy and M&A, IAC/InterActiveCorp

IAC/InterActiveCorp chairman and CEO Barry Diller loves his online enterprises. After a buying binge, IAC now owns Ask.com, Citysearch, Expedia, Match.com, Ticketmaster, and a host of other service-oriented Web businesses. But who tells Diller where to plunk down the cash? That would be his mergers and acquisitions advisor, senior VP Shana Fisher, who determines exactly where and when IAC should invest. Her control over IAC's purse strings makes her arguably the most powerful woman on the Internet.

15. Niklas Zennstrom and Janus FriisFounders, Skype and KaZaA

It seems like Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis just can't stop themselves. First they built the popular (though malware-addled) peer-to-peer file-sharing network KaZaA; then they followed that endeavor up by building the amazingly popular VoIP software Skype. After selling Skype to eBay (see #28) for \$2.6 billion, the duo has gone back to the drawing board to produce Joost (formerly "The Venice Project"), a P2P video distribution service that is currently in private beta form. Will Zennstrom and Friis pull off a trifecta of killer apps? After being forced to settle an RIAA lawsuit over KaZaA for more than \$100 million, they are negotiating directly with content providers as they prepare for Joost's official launch.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE #16 THROUGH #20

16. Matt MullenwegDeveloper, WordPress blogging site and software

Matt Mullenweg can barely buy a drink, but this 22-year-old open-source enthusiast developed WordPress, the open-source publishing software favored by blogging diehards around the world. In 2004, WordPress became well-enough known that Web publishing